

Small pox - New Quarantine
system



Small-pox.

THE NEW QUARANTINE SYSTEM.

From the Lansing Republican, March 21, 1882.

Many months ago it became evident to the active health officials that unless extraordinary efforts were made there was to be an epidemic of small-pox in this country. It was known that small-pox existed in many foreign ports from which vessels sail for this country; it was also known that travel is now so rapid that if the disease is contracted on board ship on the ocean it may not manifest itself until the victim is a long distance west of New York, on his way to the far west. This is plain when it is known that it generally takes two weeks for the disease to develop; it is certain, therefore, that the old system of quarantine is not enough to prevent the introduction of small-pox, and that new or additional methods are required. In June, 1881, a sanitary conference was held in Chicago to devise means for averting the epidemic then threatened. The conclusions of that conference were briefly as follows: That in order to land in the United States immigrants should be vaccinated or revaccinated at the port of departure, or on board ship before reaching this country; a system of interrogation and examination of immigrants at ports of entry, with a view to learning if they have been exposed to small-pox en route, or have come from or passed through any infected place, and whether they are protected by vaccination; the successive notification of the entry or proposed entry of immigrants into the several health jurisdictions in this country; the surveillance of persons suspected of being liable to communicate the disease, while in transit and after their arrival at their destination until all danger is known to be passed.

In accordance with the action of the Chicago conference, the national board of health adopted additional rules; but, owing to the assassination of President Garfield, their operation was not secured until November 14, 1881, when they were approved by President Arthur and are now in force. They are as follows:

1. That all persons coming from or through any foreign port or place in which small-pox exists, who, after the 14th day of November, 1881, shall arrive at any port of entry within the United States, shall be subjected to examinations as regards their protection from that disease, by the proper health authorities of the state within which such port lies, or in case such authorities shall fail or refuse to enforce this rule, then by some officer or other proper person to be designated by the president of the United States.

2. That in case any person so arriving shall refuse to submit to such examination, or upon undergoing the same shall be found not sufficiently protected from small-pox, such person, and in case he or she be not *sui juris*, then also the person having him or her under charge, shall be detained in quarantine until he or she shall have been properly vaccinated or shall have passed the period of incubation from date of last exposure.

Because of the delay in getting a system of prevention in operation, the inauguration of the measure was too late to avert the epidemic which it was designed to prevent; and the proposed vaccination of immigrants is now a wise measure, much needed for their own safety on entrance into the country, particularly as small-pox has become so prevalent at points through which immigrants pass, as for instance, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and at many places in the west to which immigrants travel. But the system is designed for greater usefulness than the prevention of a single epidemic; its proposed action is for permanent good. It is even hoped that in time the system may aid in preventing the introduction of other diseases

of far greater consequence in destructiveness of life than is small-pox,—such diseases as scarlet fever, etc., diseases which it is believed are not originated in Michigan, but which are constantly being brought into the state.

In the New York Herald; recently, was an account of an interview with the health officer of the port of New York, in which, after showing how impossible it is to detect the passage of infected persons and things through that port, the health officer says:

"There can be no absolute protection so long as the system of inspection in force here is not extended to the principal points through which the immigrants pass, or which they make their destinations. I have no doubt that many of the cases which pass from our observation undetected develop a few days afterwards in distant parts of the country. I applied to the health authorities of the principal cities of the west and northwest, a year ago last May, to take measures to guard against the dissemination of the seeds of contagious or infectious diseases. * * *

"One important fact is generally overlooked by the public. New York is not the only port of entry in the United States where immigrants are landed, but all the sanitary evils which follow them are attributed to some fault of the health authorities here. Port Huron, for example, is exceeded by only New York in the number of immigrants it receives. In the quarter ending last month this was 39,000. Yet at that place there is no medical inspection at all. These immigrants, coming by way of Quebec and Montreal, are scattered over all of the west and northwest, without the slightest attention being paid to their sanitary condition."

Small-pox is known to be present in Montreal frequently if not generally, and it is probable that the proportion of infected immigrants who enter this country by way of Port Huron, is as great as those who enter at New York; but if the expense is to be purely local, neither the local danger at Port Huron nor the direct danger to the people of Michigan has been great enough to warrant the inauguration of such a quarantine as is maintained at New York, or the improved system recommended by the sanitary conference at Chicago. The infected passengers pass rapidly through Michigan, and as a rule, it is only at Chicago and other distributing points, or at their final destinations that these immigrants convey small-pox. However, Michigan has now other reasons than the protection of its neighbors for desiring a thorough system for preventing the introduction of contagious diseases at Port Huron. Small-pox at Chicago (and other places) has resulted in small-pox at Grand Rapids, among the Indians in Leelanaw and Antrim counties, in St. Joseph county, in Tuscola county, and in many other places in Michigan, and finally even within a few miles of Port Huron itself, brought there from Chicago; so that indirectly it is manifestly a measure of self-protection for this state to prevent the introduction of contagious diseases at Port Huron.

The Michigan state board of health has long been endeavoring to effect measures necessary for the prevention of the introduction of contagious diseases; the action which it has proposed may be learned from the following communication:

MICHIGAN STATE BOARD OF HEALTH, {
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Lansing, Mich., Feb. 2, 1882. }

To the National Board of Health, Washington, D. C.:

Gentlemen:—The state board of health of Michigan would respectfully renew the request contained in a series of preambles and resolutions adopted by the board, at a meeting held July 12, 1881, heretofore transmitted to the national board of health and published in the national board of health bulletin of August 6, 1881, on page 45. Under the law organizing this state board it has not authority to enforce such a system of inspection, disinfection, etc., as is referred to in the resolutions, its powers in this direction being mainly advisory and supervisory; nor has this board any fund at its disposal from which the expenses of such a system of

inspection, isolation, disinfection, vaccination, notification, etc., can be paid; as officially appears from the accompanying certificate of the Hon. David H. Jerome, governor of Michigan; neither do we consider that the laws constituting, or those providing for action of, the local boards of health, are sufficiently broad and comprehensive in their scope to enable such boards to efficiently and continuously carry out the proposed measures. We therefore respectfully request that your board appoint a supervising sanitary inspector and such assistants as may be necessary, to serve at Port Huron and at such other points in the state of Michigan as may be found advisable, and in such manner as will most effectually carry out the measures specified in the rules and additional rules adopted by the national board of health, and those measures suggested in the accompanying regulations which are hereby recommended by the state board of health of Michigan.

The state board of health of Michigan hereby approves and, so far as its authority extends, adopts the rules and additional rules adopted by the national board of health, and this state board will, to the full extent of its powers and means, co-operate with your board and with other health authorities, and, if desired by the national board of health, will assume the supervision of the proposed system of inspection, etc., so far as its authority extends, and so far as it is legally authorized to act for the national board of health.

OUTLINE REGULATIONS RECOMMENDED.

The Michigan state board of health recommends and respectfully submits for approval by the national board of health, outline regulations as follows:

The duties of the supervising sanitary inspector and of his assistants shall be: (1), to examine while in transit, and without undue detention, persons [all immigrants] arriving in this state; (2), to detain or isolate in transit all persons suffering from small-pox or other communicable disease which endangers the public health; (3), to disinfect all infected baggage, wearing apparel, cars, vessels, ferryboats, etc.; (4), to vaccinate with pure and fresh bovine vaccine virus all persons unprotected from small-pox, and recently exposed to that disease or coming from or through infected places; (5), to report to the national board of health; (6), to co-operate with state and other boards of health, and to promptly communicate to such boards of health information relative to the entry or proposed entry within their jurisdiction of immigrants, and the facts respecting their liability or non-liability to introduce any disease dangerous to the public health.

By direction of the state board of health of Michigan.
LEROY PARKER, President,
HENRY F. LYSER,
HENRY B. BAKER, Sec.,
Committee.

At its last meeting at Ann Arbor, March 1, the state board of health adopted the following preamble and resolutions:

Whereas, measures for the prevention of the introduction of diseases from foreign countries into the United States are of national importance, affecting not only the seaboard and gulf states, but also states in the interior, as evidenced a few years since by the wide spread disaster from yellow fever and recently by the wide diffusion of imported small-pox; therefore

Resolved, that in the judgment of this board such measures should be continued by the national board of health, and undertaken by the United States government, as will best and most effectually prevent the introduction of diseases into the United States.

Resolved, that our senators and representatives in congress be and they hereby are respectfully and earnestly requested to use their influence toward securing any appropriate legislation which may be necessary to this end.

It is believed that neither small-pox nor any other strictly contagious disease is originated in Michigan, yet in every year thousands of persons die in this state from contagious diseases. One of the most important services our members of congress can do for this state is to secure some adequate system whereby the introduction of such diseases shall be lessened or wholly prevented. If the plan perfected by the Chicago conference, and embodied in the "additional rules" approved by President Arthur, needs additional legislation to make it effective in preventing the introduction of contagious diseases, there would seem to be opportunity for congress to do eminent service for the country by perfecting such legislation.

